

Take Me Back To Your Love by FrazzledSquidz

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Summary:

Things were okay. Things were stable. *No dark things, no dark things, no dark things*, Jonathan's music reminded him, over and over. He tried to pull the lyrics deep into himself, desperately wanting them to stay true. Things were okay. Things had actually been even better after everything that had happened, somehow.

Take Me Back To Your Love

Author's Note:

I just love Jonathan so much T-T

Jonathan had lied to Steve and Nancy.

Not a big lie; he'd just told them that he had to stay home to watch Will that night when he didn't actually have to. He probably could have told them the truth, that he just needed to be alone for a little while. But he knew that was still seen as weird, unnatural. People needed people, after all.

Jonathan did need his partners; he could recognize that. But he also needed some time to just... breathe. Disconnect without any eyes on him. Being around other people all the time was exhausting, and even though he loved Steve and Nancy and being around them wasn't as bad as being around other people, sometimes he just needed... space.

It was hard to describe, even to himself. Steve and Nancy loved to be together all the time and bemoaned separation, often breaking rules and laws just to see each other and Jonathan regardless of what anyone thought or said. They hated being at their houses, desperate to escape and carve their own way through the world away from Hawkins. Not that Jonathan wasn't, as well, but he also had reasons to stay.

Okay, they weren't reasons as much as they were superstitions. But he didn't know how to describe the feeling that he got when he was away from home for too long, like he had to physically be there to prevent bad things from happening. That was how it always had been. From the time when their parents would start screaming at each other and Jonathan would send Will into the woods to hide and he would hover at the end of the hallway, just to make sure no one got hurt. (His dad had only hit his mom once; the subsequent explosion from Jonathan and Joyce and curbed any chance of it happening again.) Even to recently, when Will had been taken. No matter what his mom said, Jonathan knew that if he hadn't picked up

that shift, he had just been home like he was supposed to have been, that either Will wouldn't have been taken or at least he wouldn't have been taken alone. So many nightmares he could have prevented, if he had just been *home*.

Jonathan knew that he couldn't stop everything terrible from happening, of course. But maybe... maybe by witnessing some of these things he could lessen their blows. Diminish the terror of the events somehow. Maybe by guiding Will into his room and playing music, the thing that kept *him* sane and stable, he could gently push some of that stability into his brother and even into their environment. Maybe by making meals and offering some small amount of money to his mom, he could calm some of her wild anxiety, her fear that she wasn't good enough for her sons. Maybe he could make things better, even just a little, just by being around, by being another body to help buffer all the bullshit the world kept throwing at his family.

He pushed his headphones up his head and listened for a moment. Will was in the living room with his friends, playing some game on his Atari. Joyce, who had been trying *so hard* to be present and available since everything, was sitting on the couch, offering naive commentary that made the young boys laugh and yell. Jonathan smiled, feeling warm inside, and pulled his headphones back over his ears, letting Echo and the Bunnymen wrap his mind in insulating sound.

Things were okay. Things were stable. *No dark things, no dark things, no dark things*, his music reminded him, over and over. He tried to pull the lyrics deep into himself, desperately wanting them to stay true. Things were okay. Things had actually been even better after everything that had happened, somehow.

Jonathan wouldn't say he'd been bullied at school, necessarily. But he was teased, picked on, whispered about. He got shoulder-bumped in hallways and pushed into lockers, tripped when coming out of the bathroom and doors slammed in his face as he tried to enter classrooms. Just small, irritating things that reminded him daily that he was different than everybody else, that he wasn't wanted or welcomed.

But since he'd become the brother of That Kid Who Came Back from the Dead, people had left him alone. Not that they were any nicer, but he didn't want their faux kindness anyway. It was like he'd reached a level so strange, so freaky, that no one would come near him for fear of it rubbing off on them. It helped that he was sometimes seen with Steve and Nancy, too. There's was a relationship that no one could wrap their heads around, so instead of trying they just pushed it away, rejecting the unfamiliar wholeheartedly. He knew that Steve still got shit sometimes from Tommy H and his new lackeys, but, as usual, Steve just shrugged it off.

Jonathan also knew that if he examined his relationship with Steve and Nancy it would fall apart before his eyes, crumble under the weight of his anxiety and uncertainty. It wasn't that he didn't trust them, it was just he still had a hard time understanding what they saw in *him*. He hadn't been lying when he'd told Nancy that he preferred to observe people than interact with them. But just observing them rarely offered him insights to what they were thinking or feeling. Not that he didn't try or assume, but his interactions with Steve and Nancy had proven that he knew even less about the strange inner workings of people than he could have imagined.

For so long he'd thought that Steve Harrington was just some carefree asshole who wanted for nothing. Now Jonathan knew that he *was* a carefree asshole, but he was also fiercely loyal, shockingly intuitive, and that his relationship with his dad was about as good as Jonathan's was with his. (Actually Steve's dad, who Jonathan had met once by accident, reminded him a lot of Tommy H, which offered some bizarre insights into Steve's psyche.) Steve was also *kind* and very affectionate which... Jonathan had not expected at all. He had returned to a house to help two people he barely knew face a monster, then refused to let either Jonathan or Nancy be alone after their ordeal. He was so good with people.

Similarly with Nancy, he'd thought she was some innocent, naive girl who only cared about her grades and could only see as far as her big house in the cul-de-sac. But she, too, was loyal to a fault (going so far as to trapping and attempting to kill a literal monster who had stolen her best friend from her) and unaccountably brave. Her intelligence

wasn't all from books and her dreams extended far beyond her limitations. She went after what she wanted and shrugged off anything that people might say or think about her, rejecting their attempts to box her into a single category. She was exquisite, in every sense of the word.

Jonathan knew that some of these changes had occurred post-monster, after their fight together and after they had all saved each others lives. But most of their personality traits had been there all along, just buried under something else or hidden from Jonathan when he hadn't known them.

He was so, so happy to know them now.

Jonathan sighed and sat up as his tape ended with a soft hiss. He stood up to shut it off and put his headphones on the desk, then flopped back down onto his bed, burying his face in his pillow. He let the commotion in the living room wash over him, remembering a few months ago, when he'd thought Will was gone, that he'd lain in this exact spot and had thought he'd never be happy again. How much his life had changed since that day.

Jonathan closed his eyes. He wasn't tired, but it felt so good to just be lying around doing absolutely nothing. It was so relaxing just to *be*. To be alive and to know that the people he cared most about in the world were safe and happy.

It was all he'd ever wanted.

Author's Note:

*I want you
And I want you only
All your highs
All your lows*

*I want you
When you're lonely
All your highs
All your lows*

Take me back to your love
by Night Riots